

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 261704Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1538

S E C R E T BEIRUT 14168

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR US LE

SUBJECT: CRISIS: LEBANESE- U.S. RELATIONS

1. SITUATION RESULTING FROM PRESIDENT FRANGIE'S RECEPTION IN NEW YORK IS STILL CONFUSED BUT WE BELIEVE IMPROVING SLIGHTLY WITH TIME. LEBANESE PUBLIC WITH WHOM WE ARE IN TOUCH ARE CONCERNED THAT LEBANESE-U.S. RELATIONS WILL DETERIORATE AND SINCERELY WANT RESOLUTION OF PRESENT IMPASSE. THERE IS ALSO A FEELING THAT PRESIDENT FRANGIE HAS EXAGGERATED IMPORTANCE OF ISSUE. TO DEFUSE SITUATION, FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA TOLD ME NOV. 25 THAT HE HAS PERSONALLY BEEN ASKING EDITORS OF LEADING PAPERS TO REDUCE COMMENT ON ISSUE. PARALLELLY, RAMEZ AL KHAZEN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT, TOLD PRESS ATTACHE NOV. 26 HE ALSO WAS SIMILARLY ATTEMPTING TO REDUCE PRESS COVERAGE. PRESS COMMENTARY NOV. 26 GREATLY REDUCED. HOWEVER, IF ISSUE AGAIN RAISED DURING CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON NEW GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT, WE CANNOT PRECLUDE RENEWAL OF INTENSE PRESS INTEREST. ALTHOUGH WE ARE WATCHING CLOSELY, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AT ANY LEVEL IS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST OR BOYCOTTING MEMBERS OF THIS MISSION IN CONDUCT OF OFFICIAL BUSINESS. (WE HAVE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT NUMBER OF MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE DECLINED SOCIAL INVITATIONS FROM MILATTS.) IN OTHER WORDS, AT MOMENT THERE APPEARS

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TO BE PERCEPTIBLE GOL ATTEMPT TO DEFUSE SITUATION

ALTHOUGH RISK OF RASH ACTION BY PRESIDENT AND OTHER STILL EXISTS.

2. CONFUSING ELEMENT IS PRESIDENT'S ATTITUDE.

OFFICIALS HAVE IMPRESSION HE HAS CALMED DOWN CONSIDERABLY SINCE HIS ARRIVAL IN BEIRUT BUT NO ONE-- INCLUDING MEMBERS OF PRESIDENT'S OWN FAMILY AND OTHER PERSONS CLOSEST TO HIM--SEEMS TO HAVE FIRM IDEA AS TO HOW HE SEES SITUATION EVOLVING AND WHAT HE WANTS. I CERTAINLY GAINED THIS IMPRESSION WHEN I SAW PHILIP TAQLA, LEBANESE FOREIGN MINISTER, EVENING NOV 25. WE HAD THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF SITUATION AT THE END OF WHICH I ASKED HIM WHERE WE GO FROM HERE. I POINTED OUT THAT IT SEEMED TO ME WE HAD DONE ALL WE COULD TO RECTIFY WHATEVER MISTAKE HAD BEEN MADE. HE REPLIED THAT HE REALLY DIDN'T KNOW AS IT WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO FATHOM THE WORKINGS OF PRESIDENT'S MIND. HE WAS DOING HIS BEST TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION BUT THE BASIC PROBLEM WAS THE PRESIDENT AND FACT THAT HIS ATTITUDE REMAINS AN ENIGMA TO HIS CHIEF ADVISERS.

3. WE DISCUSSED THE FACT THAT THE SECRETARY HAD WRITTEN HIM (SECSTATE 251019) THAT AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INCIDENT WAS UNDERWAY AND THAT CORRECTIVE ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AS REQUIRED. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE THE SECRETARY COULD WRITE HIM A LETTER GIVING THE RESULTS OF THAT INVESTIGATION AND ONCE AGAIN REITERATING APOLOGIES FOR THE INCIDENT. I SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT THIS WAS THE TYPE OF MATERIAL WHICH I THOUGHT THE AMBASSADOR MIGHT BRING BACK WITH HIM. HE CONSIDERED IT PREFERABLE TO HAVE THE LETTER BEFORE THE AMBASSADOR'S RETURN. WITH A MESSAGE OF THIS KIND HE MAINTAINED THAT HE COULD GO TO THE PRESIDENT, ARGUE THAT THE AMERICANS HAD DONE EVERYTHING ANYONE REASONABLY COULD EXPECT THEM TO DO IN TRYING TO RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM, AND THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT THE MATTER BE CONSIDERED CLOSED. IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESIDENT FRANGIE'S REACTION, PROPER TIMING FOR AMBASSADOR'S RETURN COULD THEN BE DETERMINED. ALTHOUGH HE WAS HOPEFUL, HE ADMITTED THAT AS OF NOW HE COULD NOT PREDICT WHAT THE PRESIDENT'S REACTION TO SUCH A LETTER WOULD BE.

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4. WE SEE THE FOLLOWING ADVANTAGES TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S PROPOSAL:

(A) IT IS IMPORTANT TO TRY TO END THE PRESENT CRISIS SOONEST IN ORDER THAT IT NOT INTENSIFY. SUCH A LETTER COULD DO IT.

(B) IT WOULD AVOID THE RISK OF THE AMBASSADOR RETURNING WITH SOMETHING WHICH WAS NOT SATISFACTORY TO THE PRESIDENT.

(C) IT IS THE ONLY FURTHER STEP THAT I CAN THINK OF THAT WE CAN OR SHOULD DO.

5. THE ONLY DISADVANTAGE I CAN SEE IS THAT IT COULD BE HELPFUL FOR THE AMBASSADOR TO BRING SUCH A MESSAGE WITH HIM IF IT PROVED TO BE SATISFACTORY. HOWEVER, THERE ARE CERTAINLY OTHER TYPES OF MESSAGES WHICH HE COULD BRING SUCH AS OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESENT STATUS OF MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.

6. THE TYPE OF LETTER WHICH WE WOULD ENVISAGE WOULD BE FROM THE SECRETARY TO FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA IT WOULD GIVE ENOUGH DETAIL AS TO THE ELEMENTS OF THE INVESTIGATION TO BE CREDIBLE. IT WOULD INDICATE THAT AN ERROR WAS MADE AND THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE WERE REPRIMANDED. THE LETTER SHOULD ALSO REITERATE OUR REGRET THAT THE INCIDENT HAPPENED.

7. I WOULD APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS SOONEST ON THE DISPATCH OF SUCH A LETTER. IN THE MEANTIME, I WOULD HOPE THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO AVOID ANY FURTHER OFFICIAL COMMENT ON THE OVERALL PROBLEM.

8. PLEASE SHOW AMBASSADOR GODLEY.  
HOUGHTON

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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